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Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. I want to commend BTS for holding this conference on *Safety In Numbers* and for its efforts to improve transportation safety.

Transportation safety requires good research, and good research requires accurate and timely data collection and analysis.

Speaking as the Ranking Democrat on the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, let me assure you that I support your efforts to advance this much needed initiative.

The Subcommittee on Highways and Transit has already initiated hearings on the reauthorization of TEA 21. Late last year we began with a series of TEA 21 success stories. Early this year, we expect to have the modal administrators up to testify, followed by hearings throughout the year as we prepare for, and look ahead to, the reauthorization of TEA 21 in 2003.

I am fully aware of BTS' interest in funding the safety data projects you will be discussing today, which are expected to cost some \$9 million.

TEA 21 authorized BTS at \$31 million annually, and it is my understanding that the appropriations committees fully funded that authorization each year. However, they did not fund the \$4 million authorization in AIR 21. TEA 21 reauthorization will be the next major piece of legislation for the Subcommittee and probably the next major opportunity for BTS to revise or expand its programs.

Let me give you a few thoughts about where I think improved data could pay the greatest dividends.

In comparison to other modes, improving highway safety is, by far, our greatest opportunity to save lives in transportation. Last year, 41,821 people were killed and an estimated 3.2 million people were injured in motor vehicle crashes, more than 1% of the nation's total population. Insurance, lost wages, health care and other costs related to highway crashes exceed \$150 billion annually, and losses in terms of human suffering are incalculable.

Crashes involving motor vehicles account for about 90 percent of all transportation fatalities. So it should be obvious that better highway safety data will lead to better planning, rulemaking and decision making, and a safer transportation system overall.

Trucking is a special concern. In 1999, more than 400,000 trucks were involved in traffic accidents – 5,362 people were killed and an estimated 142,000 were injured in those crashes.

Large trucks are over represented in fatal crashes. Although 13 percent of all traffic deaths resulted from crashes involving large trucks, these vehicles represent only 3 percent of all registered vehicles and about 7 percent of vehicle miles traveled. Fatality rates for large trucks are about 65 percent higher than passenger vehicles.

That is why the Subcommittee, in the Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act of 1999, authorized \$15 million from the Highway Trust Fund to carry out a comprehensive study to determine the causes of, and contributing factors to, crashes involving large trucks. The legislation requires the study to be reviewed and updated every five years.

The study calls on DOT to develop measures to improve the evaluation of future truck crashes; monitor crash trends and identify causes and contributing factors; and develop effective safety countermeasures. The study is a prime example of our interest in using data and data analysis to make good transportation policy and programs – and not as a drunk would use a lamp post, for support rather than illumination.

Let me offer a few comments on some of the research projects you are developing:

**Research Project #1: Reengineer DOT data programs**

I think it's an excellent idea to reengineer the 40 or so data programs maintained by DOT related to safety and measures of exposure. An assessment of the quality of existing data is the first step in retooling DOT data programs.

**Research Project #2: Develop common criteria for injuries and deaths**

There are many inconsistencies between programs reporting injuries and deaths. Most modes count any death that occurs within 30 days of an incident. FRA counts deaths that occur within 365 days of an incident. The Coast Guard does not specify a time period.

For injuries, FMCSA counts an injured person being taken to a medical facility for immediate medical attention. The Coast Guard requires a report if there is an injury that requires medical treatment beyond first aid. RSPA requires a report for bodily harm resulting in loss of consciousness, the necessity to carry the person from the scene, necessity for medical treatment, or disability extending beyond the day of the accident.

The modes often treat similar circumstances differently. For example, incidents involving ground crews in aviation are counted while longshoremen in the maritime industry are not; rail maintenance workers are counted while shipyard and bus maintenance workers are not.

Clearly, there is a need to develop common criteria for reporting injuries and deaths.

**Research Project #3: Develop common denominators for safety measures**

The project to develop common denominators for safety measures will make comparative risk analysis across modes more precise. For example, highway safety data is currently based on accidents or deaths per vehicle mile traveled, whereas transit safety data is based on accidents or deaths per passenger mile of travel. These differences, and differences in other modes, make cross modal comparisons difficult.

#### **Research Project #4: Advance the timeliness of safety data**

The lack of timely data drives me crazy!

Most of the data reports submitted to Congress are at least two years old by the time they are released. We need timelier data to identify trends earlier, take corrective actions earlier, and thus reduce transportation related deaths and injuries. More timely data will lend greater credibility to DOT's performance reporting under the Government Performance and Results Act and other requirements of law.

#### **Conclusion**

Let me conclude with a general observation about the use of technology to improve transportation safety and security. Event recorders have long been used in the aviation industry to investigate accidents and to help determine the underlying causes of accidents. We should consider using event recorders in other modes so investigators can be more discriminating in accident investigations. A couple of your projects envision the use of these devices.

A large scale demonstration of the most promising crash avoidance technologies in automobiles should also be conducted – otherwise they will never be accepted. We cannot mandate these technologies in automobiles unless we can show conclusively that their safety benefits far outweigh their costs. A large scale demonstration of these technologies could be the next major step taken in the intelligent vehicle initiative authorized by TEA 21.

Finally, the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> have made us all aware of the need for enhanced security in transportation. The use of smart cards and vehicle usage monitoring systems could improve the security of drivers licenses and restrict access to sensitive transportation freight. These devices incorporate biometric and other information of the owner that can be checked against the same measures taken from the person attempting to use the card or operate the vehicle.

I urge you to be sensitive to security needs as you develop your research program. Thank you for asking me to speak this morning, and I wish you good luck in your discussions throughout the day.